



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044) 20520

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s): _____

August 14, 1978

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Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

Dear Senator Eastland:

Thank you for your letter of August 1 to Assistant Secretary Derian expressing your concern about the cases of Fathers Gazzarri, Bustos, Iribarnegaray, and Maquire, and Sisters Domon and Duquet in Argentina.

We have been deeply concerned about the persecution of members of the clergy in Argentina, and about these cases in particular. Our Embassy in Buenos Aires has raised the cases of Fathers Gazzarri, Bustos, and Iribarnegaray with the Government of Argentina on several occasions and has made formal inquiries to the Foreign Office Working Group on Human Rights in their behalf. Unfortunately, the Foreign Office has informed us that they have no knowledge of their whereabouts. While your constituent believes they have been arrested, the Argentine Government denies having them in custody. The Embassy will, however, continue to monitor their cases closely, and we will contact your office if we receive any information concerning them.

As for Father Santiago Maquire, who has only recently been reported disappeared, the Embassy informed us on August 2 that they had made an inquiry on his behalf to the Foreign Office and is awaiting a response.

The tragic abduction of Sisters Domon and Duquet also has occasioned expressions of concern and protest by our Government. According to our information, on December 8 and 10 armed men seized a group of 13 people, including the French nuns, who had been meeting in a Buenos Aires church to raise money to publicize a request to the Government for information about persons who had disappeared in the last few years. Our Embassy at that time presented the Foreign Office with a formal statement of our concern over the missing people. We have not, however, been able to obtain information about the thirteen people. In addition to this demarche, the Argentine Government received a joint French-American group inquiring into the situation.

The Honorable

James O. Eastland,
United States Senate,
Washington, D.C.

Lot 81D208
Box 4963 (2/12)

The U.S. Government has continued to express its concerns at the highest levels of the Argentine Government about the large number of disappearances in Argentina, and our Embassy in Buenos Aires has been cooperating closely with the friends and family members of detained or disappeared persons in an effort to encourage a more thorough accounting of their situation from the Government of Argentina.

We also have taken a number of actions to convey to the Argentines how strongly committed we are to these concerns. Grant military training for Argentina has been withdrawn, arms sales have been held back, and we have linked our vote in the International Financial Institutions to the Argentine record on human rights. Indeed, without major human rights improvements, there will be no new arms transfers to Argentina. We have made it clear to the Government of Argentina that an improvement in human rights practices is essential to a continuation of good bilateral relations with the United States.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

Drafted: HA/HR:CHW/g/cg
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H:DKenney